



City of Seattle

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**Department of Planning and Development**  
D. M. Sugimura, Director

**CITY OF SEATTLE  
ANALYSIS AND DECISION OF THE DIRECTOR OF  
THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

**Application Number:** 3012492  
**Applicant Name:** Brett Schormann  
**Address of Proposal:** 8231 Latona Avenue NE

**SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTION**

Land Use Application to allow a 231 square foot front porch addition to a single family residence. The existing porch will be demolished.

The following approvals are required:

**Variance** – to allow a portion of a structure to project into the required front yard.  
Section 23.44.014D6b Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) required – 18.5 feet  
proposed – 15 feet

**SEPA DETERMINATION:** ☒ Exempt ☐ DNS ☐ EIS  
☐ DNS with conditions  
☐ DNS involving non-exempt grading or demolition or  
involving another agency with jurisdiction.

**BACKGROUND DATA**

Site

The site is located on Latona Avenue NE between NE 82nd and NE 85<sup>th</sup> Streets two blocks east of Interstate 5 in the Maple Leaf neighborhood. The site measures 60 by 124 feet for a total lot area of 7,440 square feet. A 16 foot wide unpaved alley adjoins the west side of the site. The site is relatively flat and is developed with a single family residence and a detached garage.

Area Development

Development in the vicinity consists primarily of single family residences on varying sized lots. This part of the neighborhood slopes down westward toward Interstate 5 and overlooks Green Lake. There is a small Neighborhood Commercial 1 40' zone located two blocks to the east at the intersection of 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE and NE 85<sup>th</sup> Street. There is a mixture of both residential and small commercial uses in this NC1 40' zone.

### Description of Proposal

The applicants propose to demolish the existing 91.16 square foot front porch, staircase and railings and landing leading to the front door entrance. The applicants propose to construct a 231.76 square foot covered front porch which would extend approximately three feet six inches into the required front yard. The proposed porch will be the same size and configuration as the original covered front porch when the house was constructed in 1908. The new porch would be located 15 feet from the front property line and will result in an increase of 140.6 square feet beyond what currently exists.

### Public Comment

One comment letter was received during the public comment period which ended January 25, 2012 expressing support for the project.

### **ANALYSIS - VARIANCE**

Variances from the provisions or requirements of this Land Use Code shall be authorized when all the facts and conditions listed below are found to exist:

1. Because of unusual conditions applicable to the subject property, including size, shape, topography, location or surroundings, which were not created by the owner or applicant, the strict application of this Land Use Code would deprive the property of rights and privileges enjoyed by other properties in the same zone or vicinity; and
2. The requested variance does not go beyond the minimum necessary to afford relief, and does not constitute a grant of special privilege inconsistent with the limitations upon other properties in the vicinity and zone in which the subject property is located; and
3. The granting of the variance will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property or improvements in the zone or vicinity in which the subject property is located; and
4. The literal interpretation and strict application of the applicable provision or requirements of this Land Use Code would cause undue hardship or practical difficulties; and
5. The requested variance would be consistent with the spirit and purpose of the Land Use Code regulations for the area.

The house was constructed in 1908 prior to the adoption of the first zoning code in 1923. The house was among the first residential structures constructed on this block and established the character of the neighborhood. The original houses on this block had covered front porches along the full width of the houses. These porches provided weather protection at the entrance to the house from which the inhabitants could view activity on the street and interact with their neighbors. The porches oriented the houses to the street and created community. When the covered porch on this house was removed and replaced first with concrete stairs and metal railings which were subsequently replaced with an uncovered wooden porch and railings, the new porch was required to meet the zoning code in effect at the time it was constructed.

Without variance approval, the proposed new covered front porch must meet the front yard requirement currently in effect and the covered front porch originally designed and built could not be restored to this house. This is an unusual condition which was not created by the owner or applicant, and the strict application of this Land Use Code would deprive the property of rights and privileges enjoyed by other properties in the same zone or vicinity to maintain the front porches originally constructed on their houses.

The applicants are asking to reconstruct the front porch to the same size and configuration as the original 1908 covered porch. This is the minimum necessary to restore the appearance of the house as it was originally designed. Three other houses located on the applicants' side of the street extend further into their required front yards than what would result from variance approval. Ten houses on this block provide less than the 18.5 foot minimum required front yard for the applicant's house as follows: 8241 (12 feet), 8249 (9.5 feet), 8257 (6.5 feet), 8202 (10.5 feet), 8206 (11.5 feet), 8234 (11 feet), 8236 (10.5 feet), 8244 (13 feet), 8248 (11.5 feet), and 8250 (15 feet). Therefore, approval of the variance would not constitute a grant of special privilege.

The proposed front porch will not obstruct sightlines, and the height, bulk, and scale would be consistent with existing development on the Latona Avenue NE streetscape and on adjacent properties. The variance will result in the restoration of a 1908 home to its former appearance and improve the appearance of the front yard. Therefore, variance approval would not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property or improvements in the zone.

The applicant purchased the residence in 1985 and has steadily restored the home to better resemble the original structure. A weather protected front porch was an integral part of the 1908 design. The original profile of the structure cannot be achieved without a front porch, and a front porch that conforms to the front yard setback area requirement would result in an impractical porch area approximately 12 inches deep with no weather protection. The proposed front porch is appropriately scaled to be consistent with the facades of neighboring homes, yet cannot strictly meet the front yard setback requirement. Therefore, the literal interpretation and strict application of the Land Use Code would cause undue hardship.

The character of Seattle's single family neighborhoods is an asset to the City's quality of life. Preserving and restoring older structures is as important as building new structures for addressing the growing housing demand in the region. The character of other residences on Latona Avenue NE will be enhanced by the applicant's proposed front porch, which offers a more appealing façade compatible with the heritage of the older homes nearby. Consistent with new urbanist, and old urbanist, principles, the front porch will improve public safety by increasing the possibility of eyes on the street and a wave from the porch. Preserving and maintaining older homes to be consistent with the vision of their original architects is consistent with being good stewards of the built environment. Therefore, the variance would be consistent with the spirit and purpose of the Land Use Code.

### Conclusion

The proposed variance meets the criteria for variance approval and is therefore approved.

**DECISION - VARIANCE**

The proposed variances are **GRANTED**.

Signature: (signature on file)  
Malli Anderson, Land Use Planner  
Department of Planning and Development

Date: May 14, 2012